

# Interesting Chat and Stage Gossip for Playgoers

## Harry Durant Gives Advice to Young Writers

It May Not Be Pleasant, but It Will Save You a Lot of Time and Trouble

By Harriette Underhill

Harry Durant is a most discouraging person. He says, "To all those who are trying to write for the screen—don't!" Mr. Durant ought to know what he is talking about, for he is editor-in-chief over at the Famous Players-Lasky-Paramount offices, and it is part of his duty to read 50,000-odd manuscripts yearly. Take it from Mr. Durant, they are odd! In fact, I believe he said that out of 50,000 unsolicited stories never had he found one available. Mr. Durant said, "Every play, novel and magazine produced or printed in English is carefully reviewed and most of the European plays are translated and analyzed. The heads of the different departments are especially trained to select the best stories which the world offers."

A Needle in A Haystack

"Out of all this careful searching and sifting we glean a very small percentage of available material. The reason for this is not hard to find. It means that there is so very little written which is worth while. A great many will snort in derision at my statement, but it's true, nevertheless. How often do we hear that the movies are getting to be something terrible! It isn't true. They are better than they ever were before. The standard is gradually being raised higher and higher. If this were not true no one would go to pictures any more." A lot of people will not agree with Mr. Durant here, but we believe he is quite right about that. If you do not agree with him, just go to see a few reissues of, say, 1917 models, and then see how you feel about it.

Lo the Poor Motion Picture!

"Now, this talk about poor pictures and bad stories is all tommyrot. There is a greater percentage of good in the movies than in any other form of creative work. If you don't believe that just ponder over the fact that not 10 per cent of all the plays produced are successful nor are 10 per cent of the books published, nor 10 per cent of all the music written, and surely not 10 per cent of the pictures painted are worth looking at."

And then Mr. Durant goes on and proves that while fully 90 per cent of the product of the other creative arts is still-born 75 per cent of motion picture product is successful. "All of which is a final answer to our critics, it seems to me."

And again Harry Durant said, "If you are trying to write for the screen, don't do it," but he didn't add: "Certainly, this means you." He said, "The quality of the material which we must have today is of such high order that it isn't possible for a satisfactory story to be written unless the author is especially fitted for the task."

Listen to the Requirements

"To be especially fitted means that the author must be endowed with a creative and constructive mind; that he must know plot and dramatic situations; that he must continue suspense as his story progresses, and that he must, from first to last, be able to visualize his story in the pictures. Therefore any mind which cannot turn out an idea big enough to become a four-act play or novel or serial of 80,000 words—well, then that mind is not big enough to turn out the sort of a story which the screen must have today. In other words, I want to discourage every one from trying to write for the screen unless he or she has the gift of good writing, an unerring dramatic sense and an intimate knowledge of screen technique. In the old days thinking out a one or two reel idea was simple, but to-day we are confronted with the growing demand for six-reel features and ten-reel super-specials. It used to require no more ability to plot out a one-reeler that it did to write a little story for the high school paper. To-day it's different—to-day we want productions on the screen to compare with 'Main Street' in the book trade and 'Lightnin'' in stage productions. "I hope what I have said will stop a lot of people from trying to write for the screen. It's awfully tough on both of us. Once we ran a contest for story ideas. In four months we had 40,000 submitted, and there wasn't one which was satisfactory."

"Could anything be tougher for those who have the mistaken idea that it's a cinch to write for the movies? And in the name of humanity oughtn't some one to stop them? Surely some one ought to stop them, but can some one or any one do it? I doubt it!"

At the Hippodrome

School holidays will make the Hippodrome, where Charles Dillingham is presenting "Get Together," his seventh annual spectacle, the gathering place for the young theatergoers this week and next. There will be all manner of Christmas novelties at the big playhouse, including a real Santa Claus. The holiday features have been grouped into a scene entitled "The Workshop of Santa Claus," in which more than 300 persons will be seen on the stage at one time. Each day a child in the audience will be presented with a doll dressed in the replica of a costume worn by a Hippodrome principal. Jennie, the shimmying elephant, will pick out the lucky number.



NELLIE BURT and LEO DIETRICHSTEIN in "FACE VALUE"



OLGA PETROVA in "THE WHITE PEACOCK"



DOROTHY TETLY and A. E. MATTHEWS in "BULLDOG DRUMMOND"

## Watch the Movies To Learn to Walk, Advises De Mille

Learn how to walk by seeing motion pictures, says Cecil B. DeMille, director general of Paramount pictures and creator of "Fool's Paradise," at the Criterion Theater. All above the age of two believe that they have already learned that simple art—walking—but De Mille says that style of locomotion won't do in the films.

"There is a great difference between ordinary walking and carrying one's self with grace and charm," says the screen master. "This difficulty might be termed the spirit of the dance, which brings a symphony of movement and co-ordination of muscles that add beauty to walking."

So important is walking that many Paramount feminine stars and leading women have attended, for a certain period, Theodore Kosloff's dancing school in Los Angeles. The school is an Americanized version of the famous Russian Imperial Ballet, where Kosloff spent ten years learning the art of the dance before he acted in Paramount pictures.

Betty Compson, star of "The Little Minister," Agnes Ayres, Gloria Swanson and Leatrice Joy are among those who have studied the art of grace and of pantomime at Kosloff's school. Mildred Harris, who appears as a French dancer in "Fool's Paradise," is another pupil of Kosloff. Jacqueline Logan and Kamuela Seales, who appear with Miss Harris in an exotic ice palace interlude—an episode reminiscent of the dazzlingly beautiful Cinderella scene in De Mille's "Forbidden Fruit"—also received additional training from Kosloff. In fact, it was to Kosloff that De Mille looked for the choreography of the Ice Palace skating ballet.

Conducting a dancing school does not, however, prevent Kosloff from continuing his acting. During the last two years, since his debut as a screen actor, Kosloff has developed into one of the most finished pantomimists of the screen. In "Fool's Paradise" he plays a canteen owner in an oil boom town on the Mexican border—a figure which gives him many opportunities for brilliant characterization.

## Indians To Be Heroes; Cherokee Heavies Barred

The following paragraphs appeared in "The Okmulgee (Okla.) Times," and it sounds interesting, if true. However, what has Monte Blue to do with it? Is he a real Cherokee?

"The Cherokee Indians, who have gained great wealth through their oil lands, have created a fund and named a committee to make the Indians the heroes and the heroines instead of the villains in books, plays and motion pictures."

"One of the tribe, Monte Blue, is now a motion picture actor, and he will be asked to play no more parts unless they are heroic."

"The movement was started at a meeting of the Indians last week, when one of the chiefs read a report showing the Indian as a favorite villain for American writers."

"Chief Roan Peters read a clipping to the effect that Monte Blue was appearing in the part of Danton in D. W. Griffith's film now being made—'The Two Orphans.' He then referred to history to prove that Danton was a radical who sent hundreds of victims to the guillotine."

"The Cherokees will ask Blue to forego any roles in which he must appear in an unfavorable way, agreeing to recompense him for whatever money loss he may sustain."

## Universal Appeal Found In Reid's "Human Hearts"

Edith Hallor is to play the lead in Hal Reid's stage play, "Human Hearts." She will play opposite House Peters; but wouldn't it have been a fine idea to have Wallace Reid play this role, as the author was Mr. Reid's father? Of course, this would not be possible, as Universal bought the play and Wallace Reid is a Paramount star, but why did not Wally take care to secure the screen rights? King Baggett will direct the picture and he has chosen to complete the cast with Russell Simpson, Ramsey Wallace, George Hackathorne, Snitz Edwards and Mary Philbin. Gerald Duffy made the scenario from the old play, which is said to be a cross between "Way Down East" and "East Lynne."



ELSIE VOKES in "HANKY LAND"



EDITH THAYER in "LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD"



GRACE ALICE DURKIN in "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN"



FRITZ LEIBER in "HAMLET"

WILLIAM FAVERSHAM in "THE SQUAW MAN"

## Griffith's New Film Opens at the Apollo On Friday Evening

"Orphans of the Storm" will be presented at the Apollo Theater next Friday evening. This is the sixth of D. W. Griffith's big productions, that began with "The Birth of a Nation" and continued with "Intolerance," "Hearts of the World," "Broken Blossoms" and "Way Down East."

The new picture was suggested by the D'Emery stage play, "The Two Orphans." The production was made with the intention of presenting it under that title. After the picture was finished, however, it was discovered that at least two foreign films had been imported with the idea of presenting them under that title simultaneously with the Griffith production. To avoid confusion, therefore, Mr. Griffith has changed the title of his picture to "Orphans of the Storm."

The roles of the two orphans are portrayed by Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Chevalier de Vaudrey by Joseph Schildkraut, Pierre by Frank Puglia, the Sicilian player; La Frochard by Lucille La Verne, Jacques by Sheldon Lewis, Marquis de Presle by Morgan Wallace, Picard by Creighton Hale, Count and Countess de Linieres by Frank Logan and Catherine Emmett.

As Mr. Griffith went into the era of the play he discovered many extraordinary opportunities for the depiction of character and the filming of epochal events. The new project loomed so large that the stage story, while not lost sight of, in a measure was subordinated to a greater plan. The new characters of Robespierre, Danton and Jacques-Potage-Not are in the hands of Sidney Herbert, Monte Blue and Leslie King.

The original story has been expanded to cover the period of four years that witnessed the birth throes of a great modern state. No expense has been spared to reproduce the big moments, and several fortunes have been spent on the innumerable details of architecture, social life, furnishings, costumes, armory, stage settings, and the like.

## Washington Irving Comes Next in the Series

Washington Irving will be the next in the series of "Great American Authors" which are shown at the Strand Theater. The main title says, "A brief review in memory of the father of American literature." On April 3, 1783, Irving's parents named him Washington for the great general. Irving's home, Sunnyside, at Irvington-on-Hudson, is shown in the picture.

## Shadows on the Screen

Ernst Lubitsch, director of "Passion," "Deception" and "One Arabian Night," arrived Friday on the America bringing with him "Pharaoh's Wife," his most ambitious film. With him was Paul Davidson, pioneer film magnate of Europe. It was Mr. Davidson, who, after Max Reinhardt, developed the talents of young Mr. Lubitsch on the stage, gave him his chance in motion pictures and let him try his hand as director of Pola Negri in "Gypsy Blood." Both Mr. Lubitsch and Mr. Davidson are coming to America under the auspices of the Hamilton Theatrical Corporation to study American methods of film production.

Claire Windsor has been chosen for a leading role in "Brothers Under the Skin," a Peter B. Kyne story, which Goldwyn is to produce.

Al Green, who directed "Little Lord Fauntleroy," is directing Thomas Meighan in "The Proxy Daddy," from the story by Edward Peple, author of "The Prince Chap."

Norma Shearer, who made her debut in "The Flapper," an Olive Thomas picture, is now a leading woman playing opposite Eugene O'Brien in "Channing of the Northwest."

Glenn Hunter has completed work on "Apron Strings," the first of the Tuttle-Waller pictures in which he will be starred. Mr. Tuttle is now at work on a new picture for Mr. Hunter, entitled "Stage Door Johnny."

Maurice Tourneur has begun work on "Lorna Doone," which will be presented on the screen with Frank Keenan, Madge Bellamy and John Bowers in the leading roles.

"The Rosary," Solig Rork's first picture for First National, is promised soon. Jerome Storm directed the picture, which has an all-star cast headed

## Mrs. Leslie Carter Welcomes Chance To Tour Country

Mrs. Leslie Carter is manifesting the glee of a small child over the prospect of a two years' tour in "The Circle" when the Selwyns close its New York engagement around the first of next April. It would be natural to suppose that the welcome accorded her by the New York public upon her return to the stage after seven years' absence abroad would have so filled the heart of Mrs. Carter that she would look forward with reluctance to the spring, when prearranged plans for "The Circle" will necessitate the commencement of a long list of consecutive engagements. But that is not the case.

"It isn't that my heart is not warm with appreciation of the continuous welcome shown me all winter in New York," Mrs. Carter explained. "Nothing in all my life has ever touched me more than the whole-hearted reception given me by this city on my return to the stage. But as much as I love New York and New Yorkers I feel like a child starting upon some beautiful adventure in my anticipation of the two years' tour 'The Circle' is to commence in the spring."

"I think," said Mrs. Carter, "I must have some nomadic blood in my veins, for all my life I have loved what is termed the road. When a star plays a long engagement in New York she becomes very certain of the reaction of a metropolitan audience, but when she goes across the country visiting different cities, each engagement is a fresh experience, because the people of each city react to the play and to her acting in it quite differently. This is bound to be doubly true in the case of such a sophisticated comedy as 'The Circle.' It is, therefore, going to be an interesting experience to play Lady Kitty from Boston to the Coast and back again to Chicago, where the play will open the new Selwyn Theater on September 5."

"When Mr. Arch Selwyn told me that our itinerary covered two solid years, with no vacation beyond two weeks in midsummer in California, it was with a bit of hesitancy in his voice, obviously born of the idea that I wouldn't like that at all. Imagine his amazement when I jumped up and danced all round the room! I just couldn't help it, I was so happy in the prospect of going to all the people all over America to whom I have formerly played; renewing old friendships from coast to coast and watching the response to my Lady Kitty, whom I consider one of the most fascinating roles I have ever had in the theater."

Victory Bateman, well known on the stage, has been engaged by Goldwyn for a comedy role in "The Dust Flower."

Mae Murray and her company have gone to Cuba to produce "Fascination" for Metro. The story is by Edmund Goulding and the picture will be directed by Robert Z. Leonard.

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## Roberta and Grace Of 'The First Year' Now Firm Friends

When the manuscript of "The First Year" was ready to go into rehearsal—a time when the producer and the author and stage director entertained the extravagant hope that the thing might run an entire season—a young California girl was selected to play Grace Livingston, the small-town bride who preferred traveling and seeing things to staying in Illinois and listening to church bells.

The California girl was Miss Roberta Arnold, a comparative newcomer to Broadway. It was not so long before the piece actually opened at the Little Theater that they told the young actress about Grace, and then Roberta met Grace and Grace met Roberta. They liked each other from the start, and since then they've been as nearly one as Miss Arnold has been able to make them.

And now Roberta Arnold, in the second year of "The First Year," finds her feeling for the heroine in the Craven play warmer than it ever was before; in fact, what was at first sincere appreciation for the part has developed into a positive affection, and is likely to remain as such. Not once during the 500-and-something performances—the exact statistics can be had at the Golden Offices—has Grace, by any speech or action, proved boring to the young woman who introduced her to Broadway, to New York and to almost everybody else who has come to this city with a view to seeing what's what in the theaters of Manhattan.

It is indeed speaking well of Grace to say that she hasn't had wearing moments, as she and Miss Arnold have been pretty thick, and if she were going to get on the nerves of the actress she would likely have already done so. "Grace Livingston, as created by Mr. Craven," said Miss Arnold the other day, "is human and real—a genuine person. It's a part that you can't help liking to play, and its the kind of part I want to keep on playing. I've grown to like it more and more and in it I have tried to give my conception of what such a young bride would be like."

"When I got the part—it has seventy-two sides—I forgot everything else. I locked myself in a room and worked all night, sacrificing all pleasures and trying to really convince myself that I was Grace Livingston. I studied the Middle Western girl's talk, her walk, and tried to get an accurate conception of the mental attitude of this particular Grace Livingston. I've never known a small-town girl and have never lived in a small town. But you wouldn't have to know one or to live near one to recognize that the part as created by Mr. Craven was a real human being and that it was only up to the actress to do her share."

"I don't know when I would become tired of the part—certainly I have not begun to tire of it yet. I don't think my performance varies from night to night. So far as my own work is concerned, I'd like there to be more Grace Livingstons and more Frank Cravens to write them."

Roberta Arnold has had an unusual theatrical career. She has never asked for a job, has never been in an agent's office, has never talked to a producer except the producer for whom she happened to be working, and has never done motion pictures or tried to do them. She played in Morocco stock in Los Angeles and that sent her to New York several years ago. She appeared here first in a Hatton play and then in another Hatton play and in still a third Hatton play.

Then came "Adam and Eva," which had quite a prosperous time of it at the Longacre. During the time this piece was sailing along easily in one of Broadway's tributaries Frank Craven was putting the finishing touches on a new manuscript, another play of the "Too Many Cooks" school, and this new play happened to be "The First Year." There were those who were sure that the part of Grace Livingston would just suit an actress by the name of Roberta Arnold. So Miss Arnold slipped quietly into the part and the play slipped quietly into the Little Theater. Since then there has been no force strong enough to oust it.

## May Vokes Tells Why "The Bat" Is Still Here

The Play Fascinates Agitates and Then Makes You Go Again and Again

If any manager is desirous of having his play remain for a year or two on three on Broadway let him engage May Vokes for a slavery rôle. If there is any such part in the play then let him command the author to write one, and then engage Miss Vokes to play it. Of course, he may have to wait a few years until she has finished "The Bat," but she is worth waiting for.

The Old Familiar Places

Miss Vokes says that any actress who enters into seems to be for her. She hates to move; she hates new places and new pets. She likes to get perfectly happy and then stay there. Her canary bird she has had for fifteen years and her dog for twelve. "It was dreadful in the autumn when I had to move the first time in a couple of decades. Yes, they tore down the broom but I didn't get out until they took the doors off and were beginning on the floor. Oh, it was dreadful to thus uproot the memories and the accumulated truck of years. I moved and I moved I'd never do it again. So I'm settling for life in my new apartment and perhaps for life in the Morocco Theater. It looks that way."

Miss Vokes has some reason for her optimism, for the Rinehart-Hawood mystery play opened the Morocco Theater August 23, 1920. Unless something quite unforeseen happens, "The Bat" will celebrate its 575th appearance tomorrow night. In Chicago, too, "The Bat" has been holding forth for almost a year—in fact, it will have a birthday party to-morrow night also.

One of the secrets of the play's great drawing powers is traceable to the loyalty of the public and the critics, the management believes. So far, the end of the story has never been divulged by any one who has seen the play, and it is this desire to know which one of the half dozen suspects wandering through the play really is The Bat that sends people to see it. Then, after they have learned, it is quite as interesting to go and see it again to fit all the pieces of the puzzle and see the picture complete.

"The Bat" recently played a three weeks' engagement at Baltimore, and any one who ever played Baltimore knows what that means. It is unprecedented.

There are now six "Bats" floating around over the country, and among them all they have managed to cover every state in the Union. And now London is falling in line and wants a "Bat" company, too, so Collin Kemper, of Wagenhals & Kemper, who produced the play, is now in London engaging a cast to open at St. James's Theatre next month.

Women and a Number of Clews!

More than 3,000,000 persons have seen "The Bat" to date, and May Vokes says two-thirds of that number have asked her to explain the whole thing to them. "When I was in Atlantic City and hardly knew my own part thoroughly people used to stop me and say 'You're May Vokes, aren't you?' I saw you play last night, and I want to know whose sleight of hand it was that made the reflection on the window and who nailed the bat on the door and which of the men moved the couch, and was the unknown man assaulted before or after the detective arrived, and why did the bank cashier come out there anyway, and which one put the girl in the safe, and—Hold! I'd cry. 'I don't know any more than you do about it; in fact, not so much, for I haven't found out as yet even who the Bat is. If you call on me a year from now I may be able to tell you.' All right, then I'll have to go in again to-night, to fit the clews all in, they would say, which isn't bad, you know."

It is a good thing that one of those understatements of fiction who rise to fame over night because the leading woman breaks her ankle at the eleventh hour didn't happen to get in "The Bat." She wouldn't have a ghost of a chance. Minette Barrett is general understudy for the women in the cast, and she has reported to the theater for every performance for a year and a half without having had a chance to play one. No one in "The Bat" ever is indisposed.

An offer of more than \$100,000 for the motion picture rights to "The Bat" has recently been refused, and what a picture it is going to make some day when some producer is fortunate enough to get it!

## First National Has New Emerson-Loss Picture

"Red Hot Romance," a new satirical story by John Emerson and Anita Loss will appear on the screen in February. It is a travesty on romantic melodrama, with scenes laid in San Francisco, capital of the kingdom of Bankonia. The picture is directed by Victor Fleming, who made "When Clouds Roll By" and "The Mollycoddle" for Douglas Fairbanks. The cast includes May Collins, Basil Sydney, Roy Atwell and Frank Lalo.

## The Story of a Crook

The story of Herbert Rawlinson's next picture has been purchased from a prisoner in the Arizona State Penitentiary at Florence. The tale is of Louis Victor Eyttinger's life, his conviction on two charges—forgery and murder, and his long incarceration in the state institution. It is called "Peterman," the story of a crook, and will be directed by Tod Browning.